

# Does adult learning increase our life satisfaction? (for everyone)

## Longitudinal evidence from Understanding Society, Hobbies & Leisure training, job-related training

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# Infographic – Work, Learning and Wellbeing Evidence base

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<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/what-works-to-improve-wellbeing-at-work-three-years-of-evidence/>

# Context

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**Life satisfaction as one indicator of wellbeing**

**Those with high wellbeing tend to engage in learning and progression benefits are well documented**

**Some groups have lower wellbeing – this is one potential barrier to learning**

**Learning diversity – learning styles and preferences, but focus on formal compulsory education**

**So can adult learning benefit individuals in ways beyond qualification?**

**Can we identify widespread causal effects from adult learning? i.e. beyond single interventions or cases.**

## Prior Evidence

Dolan Fujiwara, and Metcalfe (2012):

- found consistent effects of participation in adult learning on a range of health and wellbeing outcomes including increased satisfaction with social life, leisure time, self-confidence, perceptions of self-worth and reductions in self-reported depression.
- Formal job related training can deliver greater improvements to self-confidence than non-formal learning.

Jenkins and Mostafa (2012):

- Older people (50+ years) can gain increases in life satisfaction and quality of life from informal learning such as participation in evening classes.

Feinstein, Hammond, Woods, Preston and Bynner (2003):

- 33-42 year olds participating in leisure training can yield increased health benefits and may offset life stage decline in life satisfaction to a small degree.

Tregaskis and Nandi (2017):

- Workplace learning can deliver increased life satisfaction to those living in the most deprived areas of England.

Watson, Tregaskis, Gedikli, Juwe, and Semkina (2017):

- Learning can deliver a range of wellbeing benefits including social contact, developing purpose, enabling progression.
- Hard outcomes such as qualification, and soft outcomes such as improved self-confidence or social relations, are both important learning outcomes for achieving wellbeing impacts.

# Aim & Challenge

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**To identify if:**

- 1. participating in adult learning was more likely to create a change in an individual's life satisfaction;**
- 2. and if the effect was the same for everyone or greater for some groups over others.**

**This may help us establish how best to tailor provision and design for greatest impact, given resource constraints**

**Challenges – availability of data – compromise causal relations over depth detail on the quality of the learning event**

# What we did

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## **Type of adult learning: hobbies & leisure training and job-related training**

- Job related
  - To help you get started in your job
  - To improve your skills in your current job
  - To maintain professional status and/or meet occupational standards
  - To prepare you for a job you might do in the future
  - To help you get a promotion
- Hobbies and leisure
- Duration of training (median cut off): job-related 24 hours; hobbies & leisure 32 hours

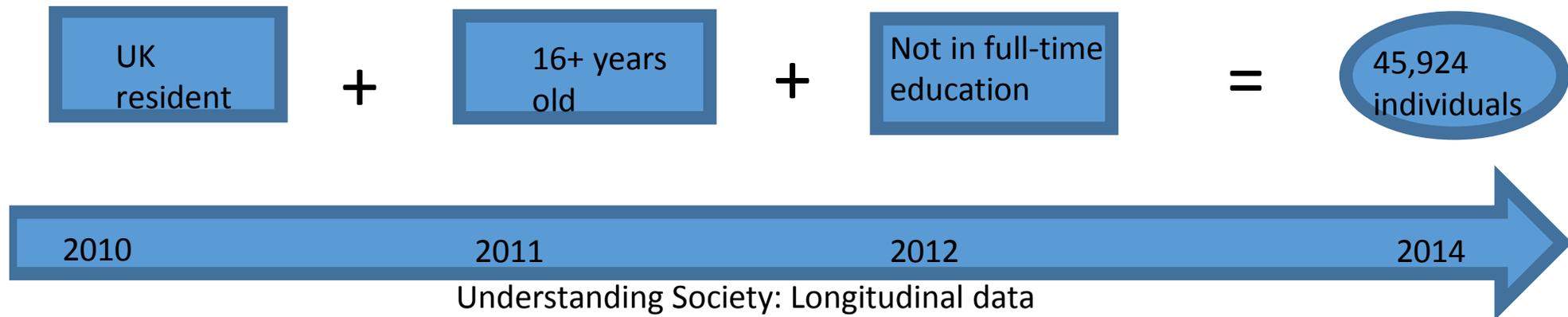
**Groups of interest: age, gender, ethnicity & migration status, employment status, area level deprivation.**

<b>Training type</b>	<b>Provided by employer</b>	<b>Government training scheme</b>	<b>College/ university degree/ diploma</b>	<b>Other type of training scheme or course</b>	<b>Estimates based on sample of size</b>
<b>Job-related</b>	70.6%	6.8%	7.8%	14.8%	40,385
<b>Hobbies &amp; leisure</b>	8.2%	5.2%	16.4%	70.2%	5823
<b>Health &amp; safety</b>	86.9%	3.1%	1.3%	8.6%	12395

**Notes: Based on Waves 2-5 (2010-2014) of Understanding Society, weighted**

# Who was included?

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# Who benefited from Hobbies and Leisure training?

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## High Intensity Training:

**9% increase in life satisfaction – those with no qualification**

**8% increase in life satisfaction – the unemployed**

**2% increase in life satisfaction – white ethnic majority**

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## Low Intensity Training:

**7% increase in life satisfaction – first generation ethnic minority groups**

**5% increase in life satisfaction – those with vocational qualification**

**3% increase in life satisfaction – those living in medium and high deprived areas of England**

**3% increase in life satisfaction – 50+ year olds**

# Who benefited from job-related training?

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## High intensity job-related training:

**2% increase in life satisfaction –  
16-24 year olds**

**1% increase in life satisfaction –  
those live in medium and high  
deprived areas**

**1% increase in life satisfaction –  
the employed**

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## Low intensity job-related training:

**2% decrease in life satisfaction –  
16-24 year olds**

**3% decrease in life satisfaction –  
those with vocational qualification**

**3% decrease in life satisfaction –  
those living in high deprived areas  
of England**

# Implications

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**Hobbies and Leisure training more to deliver than we might have previously anticipated:**

**Is there something about the action based learning?**

**Is there something about social engagement during learning?**

**Can we transfer the benefits to other types of adult training?**

**Short duration job-related training seems problematic.**

**Why? Is individual motivation a factor – mandatory?**

**Or provision – training design not meeting needs or expectations?**

**Or training not leading to anticipated progression outcomes?**

Theory and intervention evidence suggests adult learning has a range of benefits – direct and indirect on individual subjective wellbeing and on financial and labour market progression outcomes

But – are we maximising the potential from different forms of learning, and for particular groups



There are two kinds of light –  
the glow that illuminates, and  
the glare that obscures.  
James Thurber.

# THANK YOU!

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